

WHAT RAILROADS OWE THE PUBLIC

President Emerson, of the Atlantic Coast Line, Speaks on True Relations.

INTERESTS ARE MUTUAL
Railway Managers Are Trying to
Get Close to the People
Everywhere.

WILMINGTON, N. C., April 20.—At the annual banquet of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, recently held, Mr. J. M. Emerson, president of the Atlantic Coast Line, was one of the speakers, and he talked in a straightforward way on the "Railroad's True Relation to the Public." Mr. Emerson said in part:

"The railroad owes to the public fair treatment and reasonable rates, and the very best service that is within their power to give. They should aid in building up the waste places, and give co-operation in all such undertakings as far as their ability and the laws of the land permit. Their rates should be just and reasonable; should not be unjustly discriminative, and should be impartially applied.

"I believe most railroads, especially those in the South, fully recognize the above, and that the officers and agents charged with the conduct of railroad affairs earnestly strive to meet all reasonable, and at times what they may think unreasonable, demands of the public. They realize that the existence depends upon the patronage of the public, and that full justice to the public is essential in securing its patronage and its only complaint. All they should ask in return is justice. They should neither ask nor accept favors.

"The true relation of the public and railroads is mutual, and the success of one must be the success of the other; and the failure of one, the failure of the other.

Good and Bad Corporations.

We have been for some time passing through a period of great agitation against corporations, especially railroad corporations. We read in the daily papers and magazines the expressions of many people condemning and abusing corporations. That there is justification for some of the charges I frankly admit; but that all are true I am firmly deny. That there are some bad corporations, as the term "bad" is used in these days, I think no one will deny, and that laws should be passed and enforced to punish their wrongdoings is not only a right, but a duty; but to assume that all are bad is as unjust as to call the entire human race murderers because some commit murder. Railroads should be regulated by proper laws, but should be protected in their rights, and laws should be "corrective," not "destructive," but the popular idea to-day appears to be to abuse corporations, pass adverse and drastic laws; penalizing them for faults real and imaginary; requiring them to do certain things, and then taking from them the wherewithal to do it.

A law passed by your present legislature reducing passenger rates on certain roads in North Carolina, when applied to the traffic in question will cost the roads of your State hundreds of thousands of dollars, and would cost the Atlantic Coast Line, based on last year's movement, over \$200,000.00 per year, and at the same time your Railroad Commission is ordering us to increase the number of passenger trains and build new passenger stations.

Public's Duty to Railroads.

The duty of the public to the railroads is to see that they are justly treated, and this duty should be yours, the Chamber of Commerce, of this and other cities, as they are the organizations representing the commercial interests of the country.

There is a most remarkable wave of prosperity going over this good land of ours, probably without parallel in the history of the world. Are railroads sharing in this prosperity? The statistics of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company for the past nineteen months will answer this question, so far as its road is concerned. It shows that for the nineteen months ending January 31st, 1907, its gross earnings increased over the previous nineteen months \$3,792,837.00, and its operating expenses for equipment and similar items charged to capital account increased \$1,823,837.00, showing that the road has brought in nearly four million dollars additional revenue, the same "prosperity" took away, in the way of increased equipment, nearly four million dollars, so that for the last nineteen months the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company's share in the "prosperity" is represented by minus \$822,976.00.

Railroads Create Traffic.

There is another phase of this question, which possibly has not occurred to you. It is natural for those who have been talking for some time to believe that the present great volume of traffic is created wholly by the merchant, the farmer, the fruit grower, etc., and that the railroad is merely a passive agent, a material percentage is created by the railroads in their efforts to meet the demand for more equipment, heat, or rails, increased terminal facilities, etc.

To illustrate: Our Company has ordered in the last six months a total of 10,500 freight cars, 119 passenger equipment cars, and 197 locomotives, the weight of which amounts to about 400,000 pounds, making 1,200 cars, loads, of 20 tons per car, of material which is hauled by some road, and the finished product represents 10,816 cars and locomotives that are hauled to the points of delivery.

Besides we have ordered within the same period 50,000 tons of steel rail, which means 1,500 cars of 40 tons capacity, which, combined with locomotives and cars, makes a tonnage from these items of about 25,000 cars. This does not include material received for repairing equipment in use, and other material and supplies of various kinds which is probably greater in the aggregate than the figures given above.

Plea for Fair Play.

A railroad has but one source of revenue, that is, the freight and passenger rate of transportation. It, like others, must pay the increased price of material and labor, and it is not only refused the privilege of increasing its charges for transportation under such conditions, but laws have recently been passed

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ed, and are being proposed for passage, that materially reduce its charges, and at the same time penalty laws have been enacted to absorb the revenue we are permitted to collect.

It is fair to say to a railroad: You can only charge so much for your commodity, for transportation; and for this you must move it a certain distance within a fixed period, regardless of conditions, or pay a heavy penalty. In addition to actual damages the owner may have sustained?

This you will see the candle is burning at both ends, and unless corrected, the result is certainly apparent to you all.

The public is demanding increased facilities, increased and better equipment, improved stations and more of them, and the railroads have been, and are earnestly trying, to provide for all these, and as a matter of interest to you, I will quote statistics showing the action of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company in this direction:

Railroads Cost Much Money.

During the past three and a half years it has purchased new equipment (all of which has not been received, but is contracted for) to the value of \$15,805,475.93, and has spent in additions and betterments, for yards, terminals, new stations, heavier rail, signal towers and contracts, double tracking, etc., \$6,169,759.48; (which amount does not include two million dollars additional authorized, but now expended up to the present time, owing to scarcity of material and inability to secure efficient labor.)

To bring it a little closer home, I would state that of these amounts there has been spent in and for the benefit of the properties in North Carolina, for betterments and equipment over five million dollars, and of the unexpended balance, \$250,000.00 is to be expended in this State. This, remember, is in addition to the increased cost of operation.

On July 1st, 1902, the road owned 13,157 freight cars, of all classes; on March 1st, 1907, 20,774, and contracts have been made for delivery this year of 6,269, making a total of 26,043, or practically 100 per cent increase. Locomotives owned on July 1st, 1902, 455; on March 1st, 1907, 608; contracted for delivery during this year, 80; total, 636; an increase of nearly 60 per cent. In number of engines, representing an increase in tractive power of over 100 per cent.

As illustrating the increase in cost of material, etc., would state that about three years ago flat cars cost \$375 to \$400, now they cost from \$750 to \$800; box cars from \$500 to \$550, now cost \$800 to \$1,000; passenger coaches, \$1,000 to \$1,500, now cost \$3,000; locomotives that cost from \$9,000 to \$10,000, now cost from \$13,500 to \$14,500. Every item, we buy here, has increased in the same period from at least 15 to 40 per cent. Our pay-rolls, representing wages paid employees, increased in December, 1906, over December, 1905, \$121,501.29, or 19.12 per cent.

Pause and Consider.

The agitation and adverse legislation referred to above has made it impossible for a railroad company, no matter how solvent, to secure, on any reasonable basis, further money for additions and improvements, and notes from the daily papers that many roads in the West and Northwest have been compelled to stop all improvements and developments, except those actually contracted for, and for which the money had already been provided; and it must appear to you gentlemen, that other roads will be forced into similar action—not because they do not want to continue this great work, but because they are unable to buy material and labor without money, and they are unable to procure money for this purpose.

I am glad to say I have always found this body earnest and active in the interest of fairness and justice; but it is necessary for the conservative element

DOWN ON THE BIG CHATTAHOOCHEE

Water-Power Surpassed Only by Niagara—Mills Sing "Song of the Chattahoochee."

(Special to The Times-Dispatch.)
COLUMBUS, GA., April 20.—A water-power development that, in its entirety, will be surpassed only by the giant power derived from Niagara Falls, is now under way on the Chattahoochee River just north of Columbus. While the really vast enterprise is only in its preliminary stages, yet one power plant, developing 12,000 horse-power is already in successful operation, supplying electrical current for the operation of nearly a dozen cotton factories, clothing factories and hosiery mills.

Within thirty-four miles, between this city and West Point, Ga., the Chattahoochee River falls 551 feet, affording a wonderful energy that has been estimated by government engineers at over 100,000 horse-power.

The Chattahoochee is an historic stream, being the largest river in the United States east of the Mississippi. Having its sources in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, it flows for nearly one thousand miles, going from the extreme northeast to the extreme southwest corner of the State of Georgia (the largest State east of the Mississippi), leaves the shores of Alabama for several hundred miles, and singing its way through western Florida, flows into the semi-tropical Gulf of Mexico. It is a stream of great natural beauty, and Sidney Lanier has made it famous in poetry by his widely quoted "Song of the Chattahoochee."

The practical as well as the poetic side of the Chattahoochee is now receiving attention, however, for indications are that the largest industrial development in the entire Southern States will be along its banks, in the vicinity of the city of Columbus. One company alone, the Columbus Power Company, backed by four million dollars of New England capital, controls 80,000 horse-power of the gigantic energy afforded by the cascades of this stream, and is preparing to build a string of dams. One of the dams in contemplation is to be 80 feet high, and this will be one of the most ambitious enterprises of the character ever undertaken in America. Inquiries are coming in from manufacturers all over America, who are thinking of locating plants in this vicinity so as to get the benefit of this cheap electrical power.

A MULE INDUSTRY IN OLD VIRGINIA

Thomas Nelson Page, Famous
Writer, to Engage in a
New Line.

A special dispatch from Lexington, Ky., of recent date says:

"Thomas Nelson Page, the famous Virginia novelist, has decided to embark in the breeding of mules on an extensive scale at his 1,000-acre plantation near Beaver Dam, Va. A. R. Wickham, manager of the plantation, arrived in Lexington a few days ago and made an announcement of the novelist's new venture. Mr. Wickham came to Kentucky under instructions from Mr. Page to buy the best jack which could be obtained, and to be placed at the head of the mule-breeding establishment.

"After looking at most of the available stock of this character in the Bluegrass, Mr. Wickham purchased from J. A. Cook, of this county, a magnificent three-year old Catalonian jack, which had recently been imported from Spain by Mr. Cook. Mr. Wickham stated that they would probably call the jack "Mare Chan" in honor of Mr. Page's famous story. The animal was shipped to Beaver Dam today. Mr. Page already owns at Beaver Dam a number of mares, some of them thoroughbreds, which will be added to the jack with a view to rearing the highest and most marketable type of mules.

New Fertilizer Plant.

WASHINGTON, N. C., April 20.—The Fertilizer Chemical Company of this place has been incorporated with a capital stock of \$100,000 to erect a plant for the manufacture of high-grade fertilizers. The company has been organized with the following officers: Messrs J. E. Cavell, president, general manager; R. R. Fleming, first vice-president; George T. Leach, second vice-president; Richard Bragg, secretary, and A. M. Dumay, treasurer.

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New Texas Law.

AUSTIN, TEX., April 20.—The Senate passed finally the Robertson bill providing that life insurance companies doing business in Texas shall invest 40 per cent of their reserve from Texas business in securities and real estate in this State. It is estimated that there is now \$40,000,000 held in reserve from Texas business by outside companies.

March Deliveries of Iron Show

Big Increase in Production.

BIRMINGHAM, ALA., April 20.—During the month of March the Sloss-Sheffield Steel & Iron Company delivered 38,100 tons of iron, against about 21,800 tons during the month of February, an increase of practically 75,000 tons. The deliveries during February, January and December would have been considerably larger, if it had been possible to get the regular number of cars to fill orders promptly. The management is naturally greatly pleased over the decidedly better showing made during the month of March, and hopes that from this time on the car shortage will not interrupt the operation of the company to the extent to which it has for many months. February, of course, was a short month, but during January the company delivered only about 25,000 tons, while in December the shipments were approximately 19,000 tons. The iron delivered during March averaged about \$15 a ton. The iron contracted for during the first half of that month averaged close to \$20.